

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

METHOD FOR ASSURING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE OF
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SUBREGIONS OF A PACKET-
ORIENTED NETWORK HAVING A RESOURCE MANAGER

5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In connectionless, packet-oriented networks, such as on the Internet or in networks based on ITU-T Standard H.323, no quality of service is guaranteed for connections between terminals in these networks. The quality of service also comprises the bandwidth and the transmission speed which is provided for a connection.

10 In the case of data or voice transmission in local area networks, that is to say in packet-oriented networks, the quality of service is assured by over-dimensioning the transmission system resources, since high bandwidths can be achieved inexpensively in local area networks. Frequently, subregions of local area networks - for example company-internal communication networks - are connected to one another to form other local area networks - a number of
15 branch offices having a number of subsidiary branch offices. Since the subregions of the local area networks are usually provided at geographically different locations, leased lines are usually provided for the connections between these subregions. To assure a sufficient quality of service for connection paths routed between the subregions via these lines, there must only be as many connections routed via this connection path between the networks as there are
20 available transmission system resources, a transmission system resource being demanded for each connection during connection initialization. In most applications, central units are provided which coordinate and monitor the connections within a subregion. By way of example, a packet-oriented multimedia communication system based on ITU-T Standard H.323 contains, for each of the subregions, gatekeepers which control and monitor data links and
25 voice links - in the case of access to the Internet, also Voice over Internet links. Since the route through the network which is provided for each connection frequently runs via a plurality of subregions, it is a complex matter to monitor the bandwidth for each individual connection

over the data paths for all connections beyond the respective subregions as well. To do this, it is necessary to know the exact switching paths for the connections within the subregions or within the local area network. However, the very high level of complexity means that such implementation is not economical in the gatekeepers of the multimedia communication systems
5 based on Standard H.323.

Another alternative for assuring the quality of service in connections routed between subregions of a local area network is to over-dimension the connection paths between the subregions of the local area network. Such a solution requires a high level of additional technical and hence also financial input.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object on which the invention is based is to assure the quality of service for connections which are usually routed via a plurality of subregions of a packet-oriented network via connection paths having prescribed transmission system resources.

A fundamental aspect of the method according to the invention is that the packet-
15 oriented network contains a resource manager having associated information relating to address ranges of the subregions, routes, starting from the respective subregions via subregions to other subregions, and the prescribed transmission system resources between the subregions. When a connection is initialized, the requested scope of resources and the source and destination addresses are signaled to the resource manager, and also the route through the
20 network is ascertained and, taking into account the requested scope of resources and the scope of resources between the subregions of the route, a check is carried out to determine whether the initialized connection is authorized. Advantageously, the transmission system resources are reserved for the initialized connection in the subregions included in the ascertained route. The fundamental advantage of the method according to the invention can be seen in that a very
25 abstract topological model of the network is stored in the resource manager, which is used to monitor, in particular, the transmission system resources of the connection paths arranged between the subregions, and hence to assure the quality of service of the connections routed via

the connection paths. The resource manager can be arranged centrally in the network in one of the subregions, and the connection controllers, e.g., the gatekeeper in H.323 networks, provided in the subregions involve the resource manager in the signaling when a connection is initialized. This reduces the level of administrative and hence financial input on account of the simple, abstract topological model, and, in addition, considerably shortens the inquiry time, i.e., the checking time for a connection's authorization monitoring.

In accordance with one development of the method according to the invention, the subregions of the network are subdivided into further subregions, the further subregions each having been allocated a portion of the transmission system resources of the at least one connection path (VS). This means that, for different services, e.g., voice and data service, the quality of service or the prescribed transmission system resources can be determined differently for each service.

Advantageously, the packet-oriented network is the Internet or an access network for the Internet. In this context, the address ranges of the subregions are represented by subranges of an Internet address. Preferably, the first ranges of the Internet address are provided for the allocation to the subregions.

Advantageously, the resource manager has a table for the routes which respectively contains an item of information relating to the source subregion, an item of information relating to the destination subregion, information relating to the subregions situated in between, and information relating to the connection paths arranged between the subregions of the respective routes.

In accordance with another advantageous embodiment of the method according to the invention, the prescribed transmission system resources between the subregions are subdivided into prescribed transmission system partial resources for specific services, with the partial resource for the specific service being taken into account for the authorization check for an initialized connection associated with a particular service. This allows the transmission system resources of the connection paths to be used on the basis of specific services.

Advantageously, the transmission system resources requested by the initialized connections and authorized are summed in the resource manager for each connection path between the subregions, and an initialized connection whose requested transmission system resource exceeds the prescribed transmission system resources of a connection path arranged in the ascertained route, taking into account the summed transmission system resources, is not authorized. If a connection is ended, the transmission system resources for the connection routed via the connection paths in question are subtracted again, i.e., are released for other connections again.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other objects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent and more readily appreciated from the following description of the preferred embodiments, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings of which:

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a packet-oriented network.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Reference will now be made in detail to the preferred embodiment of the present invention as illustrated in the accompanying drawing.

Illustrated in Fig. 1 is a packet-oriented local area network LAN formed by three subregions NB1..3. The first and second and the second and third subregions NB1..3 are respectively connected via a first and a second connection path VS1, 2, with the connection paths VS1, 2 being connected to a router R in the respective subregions NB1..3. The router R is the linking element between the transmission networks NL of the subregions NB1, 2 of the local area network LAN. The router R is used to recognize packets transmitted to another subregion NB1..3 on the basis of the source and destination addresses SA, DA indicated in the packets and to switch them through said subregion. In the illustrative embodiment, it may be assumed that a local area network LAN in the form of a bus is involved, with the bus-like

transmission paths NL of the subregions NB1..3 being connected via the routers R and the connection path VS.

In addition, terminals in the form of personal computers PC are connected to the transmission paths NL of the subregions NB1..3. For the illustrative embodiment, it may also
5 be assumed that the local area network LAN or the subregions NB1..3 are designed in accordance with ITU-T Standard H.323 and, for connection control and monitoring, the first subregion NB1 contains a central gatekeeper ZGK which performs these functions for the three subregions NB1..3.

The first subregion NB1 is, by way of example, the central communication network of
10 a company headquarters, and the second subregion NB2 is a branch office of this company, and the third subregion NB3 is a subnetwork of the branch office. It may also be assumed for the illustrative embodiment that the subregions NB1..3 of the local area network LAN are connected to the Internet INT via an access device ZE connected in the first subregion NB1. This means that not only the Internet links but also Voice over Internet links VoIP are
15 initialized and routed among the personal computers PC or to the Internet INT. The local area network LAN may also be a subregion of the Internet, in which case the access device ZE can then be dispensed with.

Each of the terminals or personal computers PC and the central gatekeeper ZGK have both a physical Layer 2 address and an Internet address IA associated with them. For
20 transmitting voice information within the local area network LAN and also to or from the Internet INT, a respective Voice over Internet function VoIP is provided in the terminals or personal computers PC.

According to the invention, the network, the local area network LAN in the illustrative embodiment, is provided with a resource manager RM. The resource manager RM in the
25 illustrative embodiment is advantageously provided in the central gatekeeper ZGK - alternatively, it may also be allocated to the gatekeeper ZGK as server. If a plurality of gatekeepers are provided in the subregions NB1..3, then the resource manager RM needs to be

allocated to one of these gatekeepers, with it also being possible for the resource manager RM to be arranged in another subregion NB, for example as server.

The resource manager RM contains a table which is subdivided into further subtables by the address range AB of the subregions NB1..3, by the possible routes R1..n between the subregions NB1..3 and by the transmission system resources TR available between the

Address ranges AB of the subregions NB1..3:

For defining the address ranges AB, the first subranges of the Internet address IA are preferred. The ranges denoted by X can be arbitrary digit combinations.

Address range AB	Subregion NB
10.20.30.X	NB1
10.20.31.X	NB2
10.20.31.X	NB3

Routes R1..n:

The subtable indicates the source and destination subregions NB1..3 and the subregion NB1..3 to which the initialized connection V is first signaled.

Source NB	Destination NB	Next NB	VS
NB1	NB2	NB2	VS1
NB1	NB3	NB2	VS1
NB2	NB3	NB3	VS2
NB2	NB1	NB1	VS1
NB3	NB2	NB2	VS2
NB3	NB1	NB2	VS2

Connection paths VS1, 2:

Here, those transmission system resources TR which are currently available are entered; the transmission system resources TR used by other connections V are respectively subtracted from the prescribed maximum transmission system resources TR. Similarly, at the end of a

connection V, the transmission system resources TR1, 2 which become free on the connection paths VS1, 2 involved in the connection V which has been ended are subtracted again, i.e., are released again for other connections V.

TR	NB	NB	Transmission system resources TR
1	NB1	NB2	2000 kbit/s
2	NB2	NB3	200 kbit/s

When a connection V is initialized by a personal computer PC, this connection V is signaled or indicated to the central gatekeeper ZGK. In this case, a destination address and a source address DA, SA have been entered in the header of the packet indicating the initialization. Since the central gatekeeper ZGK is responsible for the three subregions NB1..3, connections V initialized by the first, second and third subregions NB1..3 are signaled to the central gatekeeper ZGK. In addition, the gatekeeper ZGK receives signaling indicating that the initialized connection V needs to have a bandwidth of 64 kbit/s, for example.

The central gatekeeper ZGK uses the destination and source addresses SA, DA and the subtable relating to the address ranges AB of the subregions NB1..3 to ascertain which subregion NB1..3 contains the personal computers PC. Next, the subtable relating to the routes R1..n is used to ascertain the relevant route or routes R1..n by a step-by-step procedure, if appropriate, in the table. In this context, the connection paths VS1, 2 used are also indicated. A check is carried out in the subtable of connection paths VS to determine whether the currently available transmission system resources TR1, 2 are sufficient for the initialized connection V with a requested transmission system resource TRV or a transmission speed of 64 kbit/s. According to the result of the check, the initialized connection V is either authorized or rejected by a notification to the personal computer PC initializing the connection V. If the connection V is authorized, the transmission system resources TR1, 2 are reserved in the routers R by an appropriate notification to the routers R and, if appropriate, in the access device ZE. The routers R then switch a packet for this connection V to the respective connection path VS1, 2. If, by way of example, a personal computer PC in the first subregion

NB1 initializes a connection V having a bandwidth of 64 kbit/s to a personal computer PC in the third subregion NB3, the connection is authorized on the basis of the remaining free transmission system resources TR1, 2 of 2000 kbit/s or 200 kbit/s indicated in the subtable of connection paths VS1, 2, the routes R..1 being ascertained by a step-by-step procedure in the subtable of routes 1..n. After the connection V has been initialized, the transmission system resources TR1, 2 used by the connection V are subtracted in the subtable of connection paths VS1, 2. If a connection is ended, the transmission system resources TR1, 2 used by the connection V are added again, according to the connection path VS1, 2 used.

To give preference to particular services, for example to the Voice over Internet service VoIP, a priority can be allocated to a group of personal computers PC within a subregion NB of the local area network LAN. This allocation of priorities can be achieved by subdividing the subregions NB1, 2 into further subregions and giving these subdivided subregions NB preferential treatment, that is to say handling them with priority during connection control in the central gatekeeper ZGK and in the routers R.

If a plurality of connection paths VS are provided between the subregions NB, then the prescribed or maximum available transmission system resources TR can be stored in the table of connection paths VS for each of the connection paths VS. In this context, with another subgroup of the subregions NB1..3, for example, each subgroup can be allocated a connection path VS or a portion of the transmission system resources TR of the connection path VS.

Alternatively, the transmission system resources TR of all the connection paths VS may be regarded as a single transmission system resource for connections from one subregion NB1 to the other subregion NB2.

The subregions of the network NB1..2 can be subdivided into further subregions - not shown in the figure -, the further subregions each having been allocated a portion of the transmission system resources (TR1, 2) of the connection paths VS1, 2. This subdivision is indicated, in particular, in the subtable of connection paths VS1, 2. This means that, for different services, e.g., voice service, for example Voice over Internet and data service -, the

quality of service or the prescribed transmission system resources can be determined differently for each service.

The method according to the invention can also be limited to a portion of the transmission system resources TR1, 2 of the connection paths VS1, 2. In this case, only a portion of the transmission system resources TR1, 2 are administered by the resource manager RM. The packets which are permitted to use this portion of the transmission system resources TR1, 2 are marked using particular bits. By way of example, in the local area network LAN, half of the transmission system resources TR1, 2 are reserved for voice packets, e.g., Voice over Internet packets, which are marked in the Internet header using a particular bit.

The method according to the invention and the resource manager according to the invention are not limited to this illustrative embodiment, but rather can be used in all packet-oriented networks having a plurality of subregions with a different geographical arrangement, it being possible for the subregions to be connected to one another by different connection paths - for example optical connection paths or radio links or infrared links. In addition, the method according to the invention can be implemented in subregion controllers in each of the subregions or else in one central controller for the entire packet-oriented network. In this context, there is merely a need for adjustments in line with the transmission protocols and initialization procedures used in the subregions and in the packet-oriented network.